



## Day 1: Fly to France

Meet your group and travel on an overnight flight to Paris.

## Day 2: Paris

**Arrive in Paris:** Welcome to Paris, the City of Light. Depending on your arrival time, you may have free time to settle in and explore on your own.

**Explore Paris:** On your walking tour, head to the Latin Quarter, named because the language was once commonly spoken by the Sorbonne students that populate the area.

**Notre Dame Cathedral:** Admire Notre Dame's sculptured façade, stained-glass rose windows and seemingly weightless vaulted ceilings. This evening, get to know your tour group over dinner in the Latin Quarter.

## Day 3: Paris

**Sightseeing tour of Paris:** Get a taste of Parisian style as you ride down the famous Champs-Élysées, an elegant boulevard packed with high-fashion boutiques. You'll pass by grand monuments, including the obelisk in the Place de la Concorde and the Arc de Triomphe. Next, strike a pose in front of the Eiffel Tower. When you see the lush and beautiful gardens of Les Tuileries, it's easy to forget the turbulent history of this sophisticated city. Your guide shares insight into the city's military history when you continue past Les Invalides. Also, learn about political upheaval in Paris as you pass by the Conciergerie, a palace-turned-jail for prisoners of the French Revolution, and the École Militaire, where a promising young Napoleon launched his incredible rise to power.

**Versailles:** Nobody does decadence like Louis XIV, and there's no better testament to this than Versailles, just a few miles outside Paris. Under the direction of the Sun King, the château that began as a modest hunting lodge exploded into one of the largest palaces on earth. On your excursion to this lavish estate, explore the State Apartments of the king and queen and the magnificent Hall of Mirrors. Walk through the meticulously landscaped gardens and marvel at dozens of ornate fountains. Discover why Versailles was more than just a vacation home: Louis XIV hosted his royal court here to reign in their power and prevent their political rise. Then, return to Paris, where you will spend the night.

## Day 4: Loire Valley

**Travel to the Loire Valley:** Leave Paris behind and get ready to explore the magnificent Loire Valley, sometimes called the "playground of Kings."

**Chartres Cathedral:** Visit Chartres Cathedral, a masterpiece of French Gothic architecture considered one of the best-preserved medieval churches in the world. Now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, construction of the current church began in 1194. With its original stained glass windows, flying buttresses and magnificent sculptures, Chartres looks almost exactly as it did centuries ago.

**Chambord:** Make a photostop at the Château de Chambord and admire the Renaissance-style architecture of this 16<sup>th</sup> century marvel where the *Mona Lisa* and *Venus de Milo* were stored for safe keeping during World War II.

## Day 5: Loire Valley

**Chenonceau:** During your visit you'll see the spectacular Château de Chenonceau, a breathtaking architectural marvel that actually extends across the River Cher, supported by submerged pillars that form a pattern of arches on the water's surface.

**Amboise:** Visit the majestic gardens of Amboise, a Renaissance-style château in the Loire Valley. Take in the same sweeping vistas once enjoyed by Louis XI, Louis XII and Leonardo da Vinci, who all made homes nearby.

**Troglodyte Dwellings:** Discover how thousands of years of geological evolution created the maze-like Troglodyte Dwellings. These subterranean grottos are still used today as chapels, bakeries and wine cellars, and you'll join your group for a one-of-a-kind dinner experience inside one of them.

## Day 6: St. Malo

**Mont St. Michel:** Travel across a causeway to one-of-a-kind Mont St. Michel, a commune and abbey perched on granite that has attracted pilgrims for more than a thousand years. At high tide, the island is surrounded by water; at low tide, mudflats stretch almost to the horizon.

**Sightseeing tour of St. Malo:** Imagine what it was like to reconstruct the ancient walled city after it was almost totally destroyed during World War II. As you walk the medieval streets, consider how what was once a monastic retreat became home to French pirates and is now one of the most popular destinations in France. Stop in St. Vincent Cathedral to see the tomb of Jacques Cartier, who is credited with discovering Canada. He lived in and sailed from St. Malo when he became the first European to sail the St. Lawrence River.

## Day 7: Normandy

**Travel to Normandy:** Here, on June 6, 1944 (the date now known as D-Day), Allied troops landed on the beaches, launching the campaign that eventually liberated mainland Europe from the Nazis. Witness remnants of the floating roadways and piers built to create an instant port at Arromanches. Explore the bomb craters that still surround the Pointe du Hoc Ranger Monument commemorating the special forces who scaled a 100-foot cliff to seize German artillery. See the Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial established—out of necessity—just two days after the invasion. Pay tribute to WWII troops at the Caen Memorial, one of Europe's top history museums. Exhibits and films document the events that led up to the war and the Normandy invasion.

## Day 8: Paris

**Louvre:** Explore art from around the world as you wander from wing to wing of the renowned Louvre, one of Paris's biggest attractions and the most visited museum in the world. Built to defend the city in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, today the Louvre safeguards collections that span continents and the ages. Enter by I. M. Pei's glass pyramid, considered a controversial addition by many resident Parisians. Inside, discover Greek, Roman and Asian antiquities, as well as precious objects from the Middle Ages. These massive halls are home to over 35,000 objects; among them is Leonardo da Vinci's masterpiece, the *Mona Lisa*. Be sure to get an up-close look at her beguiling smile.

## Day 9: Depart for home

Transfer to the airport and check in for your return flight home.